

**TITLE:** Free, Indeed!  
**SERIES:** Power in Freedom  
**SCRIPTURE:** Genesis 45:1-17 & 25-28 ESV  
**FILL IN THE BLANK:** What has HAPPENED to me does not have to IMPRISON me.  
**SPEAKER:** Judah Sanders

*(Self Intro + BYA Plug)*

Our Senior Pastor and Lead Teacher is taking a well deserved mini vacation with his wife and daughters for the next three weeks, and for two of those weeks, this week and the week after next, he has left you in my hands.

*(Joke about not teaching heresy)*

Actually, for the next three weeks we're going to be in a mini series examining the Power of Freedom. We are in a year-long series called "The Empowered Church" and most of it is through the book of Acts. And while, in this series we are going to talk about power, again the power of Freedom, we are actually going to be looking at some other portions of scripture that I think demonstrate the Power of Freedom and perhaps how we get to it. If you hate the message, you email me at [bkiley@bridgeway.church](mailto:bkiley@bridgeway.church).

I have been thinking a lot about Freedom and its importance this week in particular. Monday (June 19th) is the federal holiday called Juneteenth. If you're not familiar, Juneteenth National Independence Day is the Holiday

that commemorates the emancipation of enslaved Black People. Lincoln signed the emancipation proclamation in January of 1865 but the news took a while to reach the southern states and even longer to be enforced there. And June 19th 1865 is when Major General Gordon Granger enforced the new law of freedom in the state of Texas. And so we celebrate Juneteenth, considered the longest running African American Holiday in the country, because that is the date that everyone truly was free. And I think a lot about the importance of that freedom, because without it, I could never stand here today, as your brother in Christ, much less teach in predominantly white churches. It speaks to the importance of Freedom and what can happen when we are truly free.

Freedom is a tenant that is critical to Christianity, it is what Jesus came to bring. It is what he hung from a tree for, as a Black person, I see that as an act of Solidarity, but he did it that all of us might be free. From sin, from death, free from hell, free to love and be loved by an Amazing God. And he completed the work with his resurrection on the third day, but some of us aren't fully free yet. And so I was thinking about what enslaves people today? And there are many things.

I thought about the amount of people enslaved by financial insecurity, sometimes culminating in the chronic homelessness we see on the streets. I thought about sex trafficking, 5.1 million people being trafficked in the Americas alone, I thought about addiction—at bridgeway our staff just got trained on how to administer narcan which slows down someone in the middle of an overdose, I thought about a lot of things that enslave us today. And many of you may have heard some of those things and said to

yourself, “I’m so glad I’m not a slave—I’m not experiencing homelessness, I’m not being sex trafficked, I’m not addicted to anything—perhaps other than cinnamon rolls and reruns of the Golden Girls (I’m talking about y’all not me). And a lot of us would say as Believers we are free. But are you?

**John 8:36** says Whom the Son sets free is Free indeed

Have you ever considered what the “indeed” part means? It means completely and totally free, free from and free for, and a lot of us have been freed from addictions, habits, and choices, from alcoholism, and porn addiction, and all kinds of bondage, freed everything except ... .except... what happened to us.

Some of us have not been freed from what happened to us. From the ways that we have been harmed, traumatized, and wounded by the world and the folks in it around us. And many of us have internalized those harms and traumas, and built whole lives around them, and they have manifested as habits, fears, and dysfunctions that we have lived so long with, we don't even realize we're in bondage. I come today, to help you be free indeed. Because, and this is your fill in the blank **What has HAPPENED to me does not have to IMPRISON me.**

And I hope today to give you 5 Steps to becoming free indeed from what has happened to you. Whatever it is, I pray that these 5 steps help you find Freedom.

We are going to be in Genesis Chapter 45 this morning, In the bibles underneath the seat in front of you it is page\_\_\_\_\_.

I'm going to read a lengthy bit of this chapter and I know it's easy to tune out, but do your best to stay with me and lean into the intricacies of this text.

### **Gen 45 ESV**

**Then Joseph could not control himself before all those who stood by him. He cried, "Make everyone go out from me." So no one stayed with him when Joseph made himself known to his brothers. 2 And he wept aloud, so that the Egyptians heard it, and the household of Pharaoh heard it. 3 And Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph! Is my father still alive?" But his brothers could not answer him, for they were dismayed at his presence.**

**4 So Joseph said to his brothers, "Come near to me, please." And they came near. And he said, "I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. 5 And now do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life. 6 For the famine has been in the land these two years, and there are yet five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvest. 7 And God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and 8 So it was not you who sent me here, but God. Lord of all his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt. 9 Hurry and go up to my father and say to him, 'Thus says your son Joseph,**

**God has made me lord of all Egypt. Come down to me; do not tarry. 10 You shall dwell in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near me, you and your children and your children's children, and your flocks, your herds, and all that you have. 11 There I will provide for you, for there are yet five years of famine to come, so that you and your household, and all that you have, do not come to poverty.' 12 And now your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin see, that it is my mouth that speaks to you. 13 You must tell my father of all my honor in Egypt, and of all that you have seen. Hurry and bring my father down here." 14 Then he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck and wept, and Benjamin wept upon his neck. 15 And he kissed all his brothers and wept upon them. After that his brothers talked with him.**

This the climax in a profound and familiar story in the bible. The story of Joseph. Often when this familiar story in the bible is preached, we talk about how everything that God had promised Joseph, everything that God had shone him in dreams, came to be. We talk about how the later days of Joseph were greater than the former days, and we do so by triaging—that is by estimating the wealth, power, and authority, and position of prominence that he has at the end of the story compared to what he had at the beginning. But it is not noted enough in my opinion, that those things did not bring him Freedom. The true redemption of Joseph wasn't what he had acquired but it actually was the moment he was finally freed, fully freed from what had happened to him.

It wasn't enough that he had become successful, that he risen through the ranks, from prison to the palace, that he had married well a beautiful woman and sired a beautiful family and had come to live lavishly in the

cushion of the palace, operating in his purpose and gifting as a leader and administrator and politician. All of that was great, but it was not freeing.

Some of us have fooled ourselves into conflating success with freedom. I'm going to get in your business today. Yeah some of us have told ourselves "Because I survived it, I'm Free of it." "Because I don't look like what I've been through" and "I have not repeated what I've been through" "I don't live in the place that I came from." That must mean that I'm free. But are you free indeed? Are you so free, that if the person or persons who constructed harm, the ones who did it, the ones whose blows shattered parts of your spirit, were to walk in right now, that you would use every manner of resource you had to bless them to the fullest extent? Because that is where Freedom indeed lives.

Joseph would not find himself to be truly free until his tear washed away the resentment, and anger, and soothed the heartbreak, ushered the flood of forgiveness in such a way that he could see how God could work through darkest depravities of dysfunctional people and families, so that what happened to him could be used to bring God glory.

You may be familiar with the story, indulge me, as BYA will have to indulge because I harp on this subject a lot on Thursdays, but indulge me.

In this story, You have a family, wrought with dysfunction. It starts with a father who for whatever reason could not raise children to love each other. Some of you know what it is to be in a family that does not have the skillset of love (I'm not talking about the feeling of love, but the skillset) to love one another. This family was so dysfunctional, that Joseph's brothers pushed beyond the common teasing that comes amongst brothers, pushed passed

the point of insult all the way to humiliation, they didn't just humiliate him, but they tore his clothes from his back, and beat him,

(Some of you know what that is, to be physically harmed by folks who are supposed to love you)

They beat him, they conspired to murder him. Literally, to murder him. And instead, threw in a pit, with no consideration for how deep that pit would be, or dark, or what it would do to his body to be thrown into a pit, just complete disregard for his personhood and his spirit, to be thrown in pit, regardless of what animals, mount lions, jackals, and all manner of animals that would be all too willing to consume him

(Some of you know what is to be treated with that kind of disregard)

And whatever brothers that may not have been the ones to physically harm him with their own hands, if you study the character of Judah, one of the brothers, it's easy to imagine a scenario where Judah was less involved. It is Judah that keeps the brothers from murdering Joseph, but Judah and perhaps others stood by to watch him suffer. You had ever had somebody stand by to watch you suffer (*EXPOUND*)

And then, not just to make him suffer, but to benefit from his suffering, to sell Joseph to the Ishmaelites. It's insult to injury, because see you could've just given me away, but you *sold* me, you put a price on my wellbeing, twenty shekels of silver, scholars estimate enough to feed a family for a month or two, let me make it plain, you sold me for a couple hundred dollars,

Or for a few moments of pleasure, or so you could feel powerful, or so you could advance in some way, or for no good reason at all.

And it wasn't just they hated him and dogged him (EXPOUND) because if you get old enough, you come to accept that there are always haters (EXPOUND). Pastor Lance is probably one of the most compassionate, kind, thoughtful, giving, amazing people I've ever met, the best leader I've ever served under and *still* he'll get his fair share of emails that say he is awful and terrible and ought not have a church (*potential joke here?*)

Haters come with the territory. But often the things that happened to us that affect us most are not damaging simply because of the "Thing" itself but also and often more so because of "Who" the "Thing" is attached to. (*softly*) It was his brothers (EXPOUND). It was devastating because of who it was. Had someone else I could have dealt with, I could've moved on, it wouldn't have wrecked me the way it did, but it's because you...

(*somber and compassionate*) I know this is bringing up stuff, I know you may be tempted to flee right now, but we have to bring it up, we have to get to the place that Joseph was at, at the beginning of the passage we read

**Gen 45:1 Then Joseph *could not control himself* before all those who stood by him.** He couldn't fake it any more, he couldn't ignore it anymore, pretend it didn't happen (EXPOUND) but finally, he lost it.

And I want you to write this down, because the first step in really getting free from what happened, is to

- 1.) Fully examine and acknowledge that it happened.

To fully grieve it, grieve the loss, to let the little girl have her day to fall apart, to let the little boy have permission to not be strong for the day. To take inventory of what was taken from you. To unpack how it hurt, how impacted you, what it cost you.

And one of the things that gets in the way of doing that for Believers, is that sometimes we think that acknowledging what was lost takes away from the blessing that is. That if Joseph counts the cost and says

-It cost me watching my daddy grow old

-It cost me watching my brother Benjamin grow up

-It cost me years of (EXPOUND)

And we labor under the delusion that if we sit for a moment in the grief of it, and count the cost of it, that it diminishes the blessing that we can see on the other side of it but WE CAN MULTITASK

(Personal Example and Expound)

So we can multitask. Joseph is the governor of Egypt even as he is the boy who was sold.

Freedom comes from examining it. Taking a long hard look at what happened to you. Grief is not something to fear. One therapist I spoke to said that grief is an ongoing, lifelong process of connection and love. Grief truly is the other side of love. Our love and grief for ourselves and for others are two sides of the same coin and, when connected to our grief instead of our trauma, we are connected to love. When connected, we will experience, reevaluate and learn from the unending richness of these

experiences at different stages of our life as we grow and change and have opportunities to offer love and grief from new vantage points.

The great poet Robert Frost said “The only way through is through”

And You may be sitting there saying “Yeah Judah but I'm too old now to go back and unpack that...Im 67 years old and it happened to me when I was 5” I'm too old. No youre not! You still got breath in your lungs. God is not through with you yet and full freedom from what happened can still be yours.

Joseph was not waiting or likely even aware that he still needed freedom. Joseph thought, my life has peaked. It can't get no better than this (EXPOUND). But what if it can? What if it can?

See what happened to him changed the trajectory of his life. And when traumatic things happen to us

It leaves you with questions: What would I have become if you hadn't done to me, what you did to me? If it hadn't happened the way it happened, who might I be? Joseph had to think about that. He had reviewed his life and seen that like many of us, he had pulled himself up by his bootstraps, and everywhere he went, he survived. And not only did he survive but he thrived. He thrived in Potiphar's house. The man who bought him from the Egyptian slave market. He made his owner wealthy and successful. And when he was falsely accused (some of you know what that is), and was thrown wrongfully into prison, he survived in prison, leaning into his giftings and talents and anointing, and pulled himself from the prison to the palace. And so gifted was Joseph that he survived in the palace, a place of all

kinds of political dynamic and treachery, but he did it, he made something of the hand he was dealt, in such a way that it blessed all of Egypt.

And it is when he is at the apex of his career, the top of his game, there is no higher place for him to climb, his truly a survivor, that God says but I have more for you.

I got some freedom for you. Freedom indeed. And it lives in the full forgiveness of those who did it. It lives in the full relinquishing of what happened to you.

Joseph had moved on (EXPOUND)! But relocation is not freedom itself. It's why when we have those trauma flare ups– “bUT i dOn'T hAVe tRaUmA fLaRe uPs jUDaH!”

Are you sure?

That irritability?

That hypervigilance?–see people who don't know Say “Oh he's just over prepared”

That trouble sleeping? Those eating habits?

That spirit of busyness is on you? Your schedule stays packed.

The inability or high discomfort in extended time being alone?

That hyper suspicion of anyone or anything new?

That Savior Complex?

Listen I'm not a Doctor, I have nowhere near the education needed to diagnose you, I'm just saying maybe, just maybe, that's that trauma, or that bondage peaking up its head.

## So Step 1

### 1.) Fully Examine it

*There is a second half to fully examining it that is also found in the text."*

The text says:

**He cried, "Make everyone go out from me." So no one stayed with him when Joseph made himself known to his brothers. 2 And he wept aloud,**

What's so powerful about that, is that we don't read that Joseph cried at any other point in his story. We don't read that he shed tears until confronted with what happened to him.

We don't read that he cried when they threw him in the pit

We don't read that he cried when they sold him into slavery

We don't read that he cried when they accused him of rape

We don't read that he cried when they through him in prison

We don't read that he cried when he married his wife

We don't read that he cried when his children were born

We don't read that he cried when ascended to the 2nd most powerful position in Egypt.

Joseph wasn't a wimp. I'd've cried when they talked trash about my prophetic dream. You should see me in Brian's office when y'all send me a nasty email.

But not Joseph.

But now face to face with what happened, he cried

Perhaps it is time you let yourself fully cry. And you may say "Judah, I've cried so many times about it, I'm tired of crying!" And I would ask you "But have you let yourself cry *without judgment?*"

So he examined it and grieved it fully.

But the next step in Freedom for Joseph is also in this text.

**He cried, "Make everyone go out from me." So no one stayed with him when Joseph made himself known to his brothers. 2 And he wept aloud, so that the Egyptians heard it, and the household of Pharaoh heard it.**

*He made himself known to his brothers.* That is him saying "I'm actually not Governor like everyone thinks..I'm actually Jacobs second youngest son, and this what happened to me"

**2 And he wept aloud, so that the Egyptians heard it, and the household of Pharaoh heard it.**

He let it be heard that he was processing through somethings (*EXPOUND* optional)

And frankly, processing what happened to you may not be best to do alone (*Soul Care & Therapy Plug*)

### **Step 1**

Fully Examine and acknowledge and grieve what happened

### **Step 2**

Open it up to in a safe Space (Healing is a community practice *EXPOUND*)

And you get to determine what that safe space is for you. Joseph made the space safe first (“everyone get out!”), then he took off his governor's crown and made himself known and was vulnerable. Freedom requires vulnerability.

I gotta take off this crown (*EXPOUND*)

(POTENTIAL DEMONSTRATION DURING THE DESCRIPTION OF REMOVING BARRIERS TO VULNERABILITY- Judah takes off blazer, tie, button down (has T-shirt beneath), shoes, and takes hair down?????) and in order to be free, someone has got to see me, all of me. The broken pieces, the scars, the traumas. To be free, someone has got to see beyond Judah the Pastor and see Judah the person.

And in that moment of vulnerability and sharing, he was able to see what had happened to him fully, he recounts it but listen to the way he tells it post examination & vulnerability:

#### **Verse 4**

**“I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt.**

**“And Now”** (Now that I have processed it, grieved it, wept over it, now that I have opened it up, now that I have begun to do my work....Now, I can forgive you)

**5 And now do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here,** (You did it, I'm not gonna pretend that you didn't)

But now I also see God in it.

And what I want to be clear about, is that you don't *force* yourself to see God in it, you *ask* God to *reveal* Himself in it. See God cannot be seen lest he reveal himself (*EXPOUND*)

#### **Step 3**

**Ask God to reveal Himself amidst what happened** (*EXPOUND*)

Joseph would never see how far the ripples of what happened to him were used by God (*Culmination Gospel Story*)

Listen to how Joseph is able to talk about his story once he is engaged in the fullness of healing. He says:

**God sent me before you to preserve life. 6 For the famine has been in the land these two years, and there are yet five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvest. 7 And God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors.**

You and I thought our whole situation was divorced from God, but God was never not with us (EXPOUND).

**8 So it was not you who sent me here, but God. He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt.**

Joseph says “So go get my Daddy and tell him all the things. Tell him “I'm alright.” I wasn't alright until y'all came, and I had to face and grieve it, and expose it, because I needed a catalyst to get to complete freedom, but the key to my liberty was forgiving you and seeing God in what happened to me.

Joseph, after acknowledging, examining, fully grieving, sharing it in safe space, is finally at the point of forgiving them. Forgiveness is generally not the first step. Many of us have been unsuccessful because we started trying to forgive before we looked at what we were forgiving.

So lets review:

### **Step 1**

**Fully Examine and acknowledge and grieve what happened**

### **Step 2**

Open it up to in a safe Space

### Step 3

Ask God to reveal Himself amidst what happened

### Step 4

#### Radical Forgiveness (*EXPOUND*)

This is the conscious, deliberate decision to release the person and or the situation from the debt owed. It is the decision to release yourself from the burden of corrosive anger and resentment, and to lean into peace of mind about what happened because you have done the first 3 steps which allows you to reframe the situation in light of Jesus and release the person from the debt.

**14 Then he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck and wept, (I want you to see that this is progressive, that its process. There is more crying) and Benjamin wept upon his neck. 15 And he kissed all his brothers and wept upon them. After that his brothers talked with him.**

Again what I want you to see is that there is more processing. It was a multi step journey that took some time. It takes some time and healing and finding freedom. And that is okay. It's okay to take your time and walk through your process and do your work with God. Joseph had the gift of time in this story. It took years until he saw the fullness of the ways God was at redeeming the awful things that happened to him by his brothers. And when you take all the time that you need to do this work, you find freedom indeed. Lets read

**16** When the report was heard in Pharaoh's house, “Joseph's brothers have come,” it pleased Pharaoh and his servants. **17** And Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Say to your brothers, ‘Do this: load your beasts and go back to the land of Canaan, **18** and take your father and your households, and come to me, and I will give you the best of the land of Egypt, and you shall eat the fat of the land.’”

Listen, The Final Step in finding freedom from what happened,

### **Step 5**

**is to Bless out of it. (EXPOUND)**

1. Fully Examine It
2. Open it up in a Safe Place
3. Ask God to reveal Himself in it
4. Work through Radical forgiveness
5. Bless Out of it

Let's keep reading, skip down to verse 25

**25** So they went up out of Egypt and came to the land of Canaan to their father Jacob. **26** And they told him, “Joseph is still alive, and he is ruler over all the land of Egypt.” And his heart became numb, for he did not believe them. **27** But when they told him all the words of Joseph, which he had said to them, and when he saw the wagons that Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of their father Jacob revived.

Your freedom could be someone else's revival (EXPOUND)

**28 And Israel said, “It is enough; Joseph my son is still alive. I will go and see him before I die.”**

That is Freedom. It is enough that I'm alive. Freedom begets Freedom. Joseph got free and was able to free his brothers and his Father. This dysfunctional family goes to Egypt thinking they will get food, and what they got was Free. True freedom entails seeing our own narrative through God's eyes rather than constructing it out of our pain and grudges.

So as you leave this weekend, I want you to take a good inventory of your life and see if you are still beholden to something that has happened to you. And then I want you to consider what step you may need to take because Jesus did not die for you to stay bound. He came that you might have life and have it more abundantly. He came that you might be Free, indeed.